Assessment

MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP)

U.S. Marine Corps
June 2000

MSTP Pamphlet 6-9

Assessment

This pamphlet supports the academic curricula of the Marine Air Ground
Task Force Staff Training Program (MSTP).

U.S. Marine Corps
June 2000

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MSTP Center (C 54) MCCDC
3300 Russell Road
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5069

23 June 2000

FOREWORD

1. PURPOSE. MSTP Pamphlet 6-9, *Assessment*, offers a definition of assessment and provides techniques and procedures that the commander and staff can use when developing their assessment methodology.

2. SCOPE. This pamphlet addresses assessment as it applies to the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) and major subordinate commands. This publication discusses the conceptual and doctrinal basis for assessment as well as techniques and procedures for staff organization and information management as they relate to the assessment process.

3. SUPERSESSION. None.

4. CHANGES. Recommendations for improvements to this pamphlet are encouraged from commands as well as from individuals. The attached User Suggestion Form can be reproduced and forwarded to:

Commanding General (C 54)
3300 Russell Road
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5001

Recommendations may also be submitted electronically to:
opso@mstp.quantico.usmc.mil

5. CERTIFICATION. Reviewed and approved this date.

S.W. RAWSON
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Director
MAGTF Staff Training Program Center
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia

Throughout this pamphlet, masculine nouns and pronouns are used for the sake of simplicity. Except where otherwise noted, these nouns and pronouns apply to either sex.

USER SUGGESTION FORM

From:

To: Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (C 54), 3300 Russell Road, Quantico, Virginia 22134-5001

1. In accordance with the Foreword, individuals are encouraged to submit suggestions concerning this Pamphlet directly to the above addressee

Page _____   Article/Paragraph No. _____

Line No. _____   Figure/Table No. _____

Nature of Change: Add   Delete
                               Change   Correct

2. Proposed Text: (Verbatim, double-spaced; continue on additional pages as necessary.

3. Justification/Source: (Need not be double-spaced.)

NOTE:
1. Only one recommendation per page.
2. Locally reproduced forms may be used for e-mail submissions to:
        opso@mstp.quantico.usmc.mil

This page intentionally left blank.

Record of Changes

Change No.	Date of Change	Entry Date	Organization	Signature

This page intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

What is Assessment?

Victory on the battlefield may be dependent on the commander's timely assessment of the success or failure of military operations. The following discussion focuses on the conceptual aspects of assessment and offers a definition that is based on Marine Corps doctrine.

1001. Defining Assessment

Assessment answers the commander's question, *"How are we doing?"* It should help the commander identify success or failure, determine the extent to which required conditions have been met for follow-on actions, and recognize whether a particular end state has been reached. More specifically, assessment should enable the commander to estimate the overall progress of an operation as it unfolds in the battlespace. By estimating this progress, the commander can make informed decisions for future actions.

> *Assessment is the continuous appraisal of military operations to determine progress toward established goals.*

This definition highlights four key aspects of assessment. First, assessment is continuous. Operations must be assessed continuously in order to make timely and relevant decisions. Second, assessment must be focused on the *overall* effectiveness of the command as it conducts operations. It must consider all elements of the force as well as the warfighting functions (*command and control*, *intelligence*, *fires*, *maneuver*, *logistics*, and *force protection*). Third, assessment must be focused on the goals of the operation which are derived from the commander's intent, tasks, and the envisioned end state. As will be discussed later, the conditions necessary to achieve these goals must be clearly articulated in order to adequately assess the command's actions. Finally, assessment must be oriented on the future.

Assessing current and past actions is of little value unless that assessment is used as the basis for future decisions and actions.

1002. Doctrinal Basis

Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 6, *Command and Control*, establishes the doctrinal foundation and the conceptual framework for assessment.

> *The commander commands by deciding what needs to be done and by directing or influencing the conduct of others. Control takes the form of feedback—the continuous flow of information about the unfolding situation returning to the commander—which allows the commander to adjust and modify command action as needed. Feedback indicates the difference between the goals and the situation as its exists…Feedback is the mechanism that allows commanders to adapt to changing circumstances—to exploit fleeting opportunities, respond to developing problems, modify schemes, or redirect efforts.*

Assessment plays a key role in the ability of the commander to command. An accurate assessment allows the commander to make timely and relevant decisions for future actions. Control, in the form of *feedback*, is a prerequisite for building the commander's *situational awareness* so that he can assess. In other words, the commander requires situational awareness to conduct assessment.

Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 5-12C, *Marine Corps Supplement to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,* defines situational awareness as—

> *Knowledge and understanding of the current situation which promotes timely, relevant, and accurate assessment of friendly, enemy, and other operations within the battlespace in order to facilitate decisionmaking. An informational perspective and skill that foster an ability to determine quickly the context and relevance of events that are unfolding.*

This definition identifies two essential elements of situational awareness. First, there is an *informational* element to situational awareness. The staff

and major subordinate commands provide *analytical* information in the form of feedback to help build the commander's understanding of the situation. Second, an element of *skill* is required. Part of this skill is the *intuitive* aspect of situational awareness that the commander must provide in order to understand the situation in the absence of complete information. This personal element of situational awareness is based on the commander's experience, education, judgement, and intuition.

The combination of the *analytical* and *intuitive* aspects provides the commander with an image of the situation from which he can base future decisions. Situational awareness allows the commander to compare achieved results to the desired results that are established in the plan. The recognition that a difference exists between the actual situation and the plan is the catalyst for decisionmaking. The ability to make an accurate comparison is the essence of assessment since it helps the commander identify the adjustments and modifications to command actions that are required to accomplish his goals. (See figure 1-1.)
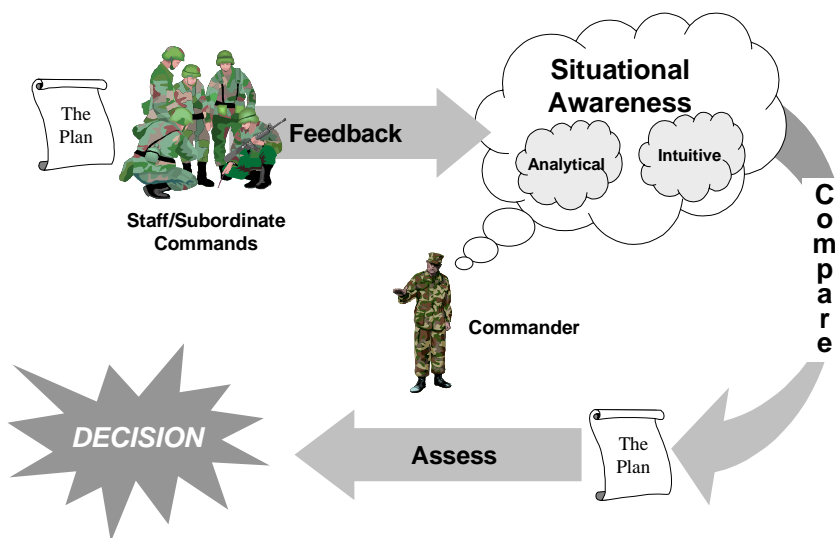

Figure 1-1. The assessment process.

This page intentionally left blank.

Planning

The assessment process begins in planning. Planning is where the commander establishes his intent (purpose) for the mission as well as his envisioned end state. It is also where the staff identifies the essential tasks and associated conditions that must be accomplished in order to achieve mission success. These elements (intent, end state, essential tasks, and conditions) are expressed in the commander's order and will be used as the standards or "gauges" for measuring performance in execution.

> *WORDS MATTER! It is critical that clear, precise, and accurate language is used to articulate intent, end state, tasks, and conditions.*

2001. The Marine Corps Planning Process

Assessment has a role in each step of the planning process. Figure 2-1 shows some of the products each step produces that may be used in assessment.
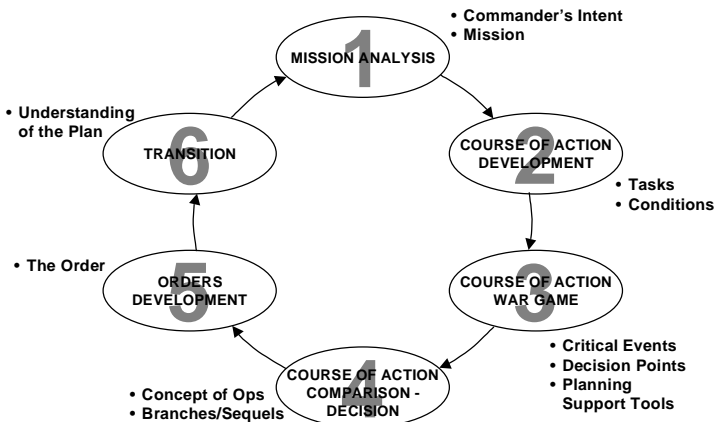

Figure 2-1. The Marine Corps Planning Process.

a. Mission Analysis

The purpose of mission analysis is to review and analyze orders, guidance, and other information that is provided by higher headquarters in order to produce a unit mission statement. The clear articulation of commander's intent and the accurate identification of the unit's mission statement are critical to assessment.

- **Commander's Intent.** Commander's intent helps subordinates understand the larger context of their actions and guides them in the absence of orders. It allows subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative—in a way that is consistent with the higher commander's aims—when the unforeseen occurs. This freedom of action, within the broad guidance of the commander's intent, creates tempo during planning and execution. Higher and subordinate commander's intents must be aligned. The purpose of the operation may be derived from the "in order to…" portion of the mission statement or the execution paragraph of the higher commander's operation plan or operation order. Commander's intent is the commander's personal expression of the purpose of the operation. It must be clear, concise, and easily understood. It may also include how the commander envisions achieving a decision as well as the end state or conditions that, when satisfied, accomplish the purpose. By clearly describing the end state, the commander lays out the foundation for assessment. Purpose and end state should be expressed in clear and tangible terms so that progress toward desired conditions can be measured and appropriate essential tasks can be identified.
- **Mission**. The mission statement is derived from all or some of the essential tasks. Essential tasks are specified or implied tasks that *define mission success and apply to the force as a whole.* These are tasks that must be completed successfully in order for the commander to accomplish his purpose. The commander's desired end state conditions should result from the successful completion of essential tasks. By tracking essential tasks, the commander can assess how well his force is accomplishing the mission.

b. Course of Action Development

During course of action (COA) development, planners use the mission statement, commander's intent (purpose and end state), and commander's planning guidance to develop courses of action. The COAs should identify

the tasks and associated conditions that are required to complete the essential tasks. By properly articulating tasks and conditions, planners establish the "nuts and bolts" for assessing operations in execution.

- **Tasks**. MCDP 1, *Warfighting*, states, "There are two parts to any mission: the task to be accomplished and the reason or intent behind it…The task describes the action to be taken while the intent describes the purpose of the action."
  If tasks are to be assessed in execution, planners must craft proper task statements when developing COAs. Tasks must have a corresponding purpose that describes effects in tangible and measurable terms. Generally, these effects can be articulated in terms of time, sizes of units, observable capabilities, and/or terrain. Take the following task statement for example—

  - *Neutralize the 3rd Motorized Rifle Brigade.*

  Based on this task statement, it would be difficult to determine if the task was successfully accomplished in execution. There is no purpose associated with the task that qualifies task accomplishment. It becomes far easier to identify success or failure if the task is rewritten as such –

  - *Neutralize the 3rd Motorized Rifle Brigade in order to delay its reinforcement of I Corps vicinity MEF Objective 1 by 96 hours.*

  Because a purpose is identified and some tangible qualifiers in terms of time and terrain are provided in planning, the degree of task accomplishment will be more easily recognized in execution.

- **Conditions**. A condition can serve one of two purposes. It can describe the status of the battlespace that the commander would like to have in place before executing a decision (such as commencing an amphibious assault) or it can be used to determine when the purpose of a task is achieved. Conditions should be tied to a task's purpose and they should be expressed in enough detail so that progress can be assessed, yet broad enough to provide commanders the flexibility to adjust actions to meet unexpected changes.

  Conditions that are established in planning must be understandable, relevant, and measurable in order to be effective assessment tools.

Worded properly, conditions may report on themselves. When articulating conditions, planners should ask themselves the question, "What would this condition mean to me if I was on the receiving end of the plan?" For example, the following condition can be interpreted in various ways:

- *Phase II concludes once the landing is assured.*

However, the condition gains more clarity and meaning by rewording it as such:

- *Phase II concludes once the direct air support center reports it is established ashore.*

By tying the decision to proceed to the next phase to an event that is readily identified, the planners have provided the commander and his executors a trigger for future action that is commonly understood.

- **Measures of Effectiveness**. Some conditions cannot be addressed so neatly in a single sentence. In such cases, a condition may need further amplification in the form of measures of effectiveness (MOEs). MOEs may not provide the commander with complete certainty, but they should serve as tangible indicators of how close he is to establishing desired conditions.

MOEs are indicators that demonstrate the degree to which a condition has been satisfied.

There is no checklist for developing MOEs, but there are some general rules that can be used to help establish effective MOEs.

MOEs should be relevant to the condition and task they are designed to measure. In other words, when developing MOEs, the right questions should be asked. For example:

During World War Two, British Merchant ships in the Mediterranean were armed with guns to ward off enemy aircraft. These guns were in short supply, expensive, and needed elsewhere. After a few months of operation on the ships an effectiveness evaluation was directed which showed that the enemy aircraft were

shot down in only about four percent of the attacks. This information formed the basis for a decision to remove the guns from the ships and redirect them to more gainful employment. It was then pointed out that the wrong Measure of Effectiveness (MOE) had been used in the study. The real objective was to protect the merchant ships; not necessarily to destroy enemy aircraft, which could be done more efficiently in other ways. If the guns forced the aircraft to maneuver at higher altitude, expend more fuel and decreased their accuracy, they would have served their purpose. When the MOE was framed in terms of the proper objective, it was found that only ten percent of the protected ships had been sunk when attacked, compared with twenty-five percent of the unprotected ships. Based on this measure, the guns were left on the ships. (*An Executive Level Text in Resource Allocation Decision Making,* National Security Decision Making Dept, U.S. Naval War College, March 1997)

In this case, a decision was based on an MOE that was not relevant to the task. The MOE should have focused on how effectively the guns protected the merchant ships (the essential task). Instead, the initial MOE focused on an irrelevant question (*How many enemy aircraft were shot down?*).

Additionally, MOEs must be reviewed continuously during execution to ensure that they remain relevant. If a task or condition is modified in planning, then the MOEs most likely will need adjustment as well.

MOEs must be measurable in terms of available collection assets, terrain, and time. Ineffective MOEs are often described as a percent or number that represents the level of damage inflicted on an enemy organization (i.e., *regimental artillery groups (RAGs) reduced by 50%*). This methodology is problematic in that it is usually difficult to determine the actual number of vehicles, weapon systems, or personnel destroyed or neutralized. In most cases, it is more effective to establish MOEs on the basis of observable activities. Take the following condition:

- *3rd RAG unable to mass fires at or above the battalion level on LZ Dodo from H-Hour to H+36.*

Some activity-based MOEs that are both measurable and relevant to the established condition may be:

- *No massed fires observed from 3rd RAG units within 30 km of LZ Dodo for 48 hours prior to H-Hour.*
- *Radio communication between RAG headquarters and subordinate battalion headquarters reduced from indicators and warning baseline by 50%. (In this case, a percentage may be useful since it is based on an established standard and the level of activity is measurable.)*
- *No observed reinforcement of 3rd RAG units for 72 hours prior to H-Hour.*

While these MOEs cannot guarantee that the condition is satisfied, they do provide the commander with some reasonable indications that the condition exists.

The number of MOEs should be limited. If too many MOEs are used, the assessment process becomes unwieldy for the commander. Moreover, a force's ability to collect and report on MOEs may be exceeded if too many MOEs are developed. Only those MOEs that are critical to measuring whether a condition has been established should be identified in COA development.

c. Course of Action War Game

COA wargaming allows the staff and subordinate commanders to gain a common understanding of friendly—and potential enemy—COAs. The COA war game is particularly valuable to the assessment effort since it validates whether the essential and subordinate tactical tasks will achieve the commander's intent. It also indicates whether the identified conditions and MOEs associated with these tasks are relevant, achievable, and measurable. Additionally, the war game will help the commander and his staff identify branches and sequels.

During the war game, critical events and decision points (DPs) will be developed, refined, and graphically displayed. For the most part, critical events and DPs will be associated with the tasks and conditions identified in COA development.

- **Critical Events**. Critical events are events that influence mission accomplishment. They include—

  - Subordinate tasks that support the accomplishment of the essential tasks identified during mission analysis.
  - All major events that require that conditions be established; e.g., a passage of lines or opening a main supply route.
  - Enemy initiated events that trigger significant friendly actions or decisions.

- **Decision Points**. A DP is an event or a location in the battlespace where a critical decision is required during mission execution. DPs do not dictate the substance of the decision, only that a decision should be made because the event is expected to affect friendly COAs. Geographic DPs are almost always related to a specific type of enemy unit appearing at a specific location in the battlespace. Event-related DPs can relate to either the friendly force or the enemy. Generally, DPs are linked to conditions that are associated with assigned tasks.

  For example, assume that a MEF commander has determined that the following conditions be established before he commences an attack as a joint force's main effort:

  - *The joint force commander's supporting attack has reached Phase Line Red by D+33.*
  - *The enemy's corps reserve will not reach MEF Objective 1 within 72 hours of the MEF commencing the attack.*

  Each of the above conditions can represent a DP for the commander. If the supporting attack has not reached Phase Line Red by the designated time, the commander must decide whether he will delay his attack or continue. If the movement rate of the enemy's corps reserve will allow it to be in the vicinity of MEF Objective 1 within 72 hours of the attack, then the commander must decide whether to allocate more assets to delay those forces.

- **Named Areas of Interest and Targeted Areas of Interest**. DPs relate to critical events and are linked to named areas of interest (NAIs) and targeted areas of interest (TAIs). By identifying NAIs and

TAIs and determining what assets will be used to collect on these areas, planners can determine to what extent conditions and MOEs can be observed in execution.

- **Decision Support Template and Matrix**. The decision support template and matrix are normally developed during the COA war game and they are particularly useful to the assessment process. The decision support template depicts DPs, time phase lines associated with movement of enemy and friendly forces, the flow of the operation, and other information required to execute a specific friendly COA. The decision support matrix provides a recap of expected events, DPs, and planned friendly actions in a narrative form. It shows where and when a decision must be taken if a specific action is to take place. It ties DPs to NAIs, TAIs, commander's critical information requirement (CCIRs), collection assets, and potential friendly response options. Because the decision support template and matrix focus on future decisions, they are key planning tools that help the commander assess in execution.
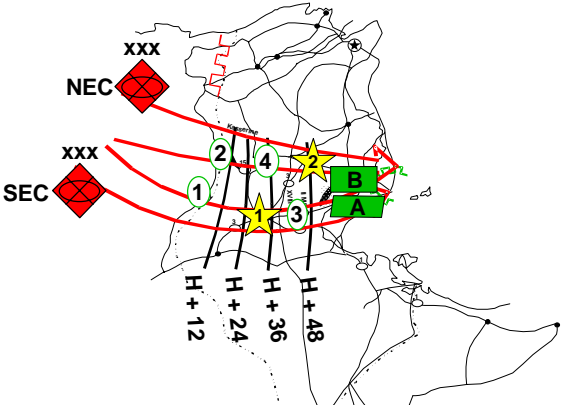
Figure 2-2. Sample decision support template.

DP	EVENT	NET/NLT	NAI	TAI	FRIENDLY ACTION
1	Redland forces enter Blueland, lead division of SEC advancing toward Kahnville	NET H+24	1	A	Covering force withdraws; Marine aircraft wing interdicts west of PL Gray
2	Redland forces seize junction of Hwys 7 & 8. Lead divisions of NEC turn SE toward Kahnville	NET H+48	4	B	Execute branch plan PUCK

Table 2-1. Sample decision support matrix.

12

d. Course of Action Comparison and Decision

During COA comparison and decision, the commander evaluates all friendly courses of action against established criteria, evaluates them against each other, and selects the COA that he believes will best accomplish the mission. The commander may refine his mission statement (including his commander's intent and essential tasks) and concept of operations as well as identify any branches that need further staff attention. These refinements may require that the conditions and MOEs that were established in COA development be modified in order to maintain their relevancy.

Once the commander has made a decision, he should conduct a review of the COA with subordinate commanders. He must review the mission statement to ensure that he has captured all essential tasks required by the selected COA. He also must review the conditions associated with those tasks to ensure they are clear, relevant, and measurable.

With the commander's guidance, the staff refines and completes the concept of operations. The concept of operations (with properly articulated tasks and conditions, complete planning support tools, and identified branches and sequels) lays out the "glidepath" that the commander intends to follow toward mission accomplishment. As such, the concept of operations forms the basis for assessment.

e. Orders Development

The order is the primary assessment tool. It is the most widely disseminated form of the plan. It must clearly articulate the commander's intent, desired end state, and concept of operations (to include tasks and conditions) so that success or failure can be readily recognized throughout the force. It must also delineate the procedures for managing information so that the commander receives the information he needs for decisionmaking.

- **Annex U (Information Management)**. Annex U establishes the procedures for obtaining, manipulating, directing, and controlling information. The information management plan should be tailored to the individual needs of the commander, the specifics of the mission, and the capabilities of the force. The information management plan should include specific guidance for common tactical picture management, collaborative planning systems integration, request for information management procedures, staff/major subordinate

13

command reporting procedures, and network applications used to post information.

- **Annex X (Execution Checklist)**. Annex X is one of the most useful parts of the order for assessing operations. The execution checklist helps the commander to coordinate activities and maintain situational awareness so that he can assess. It provides a convenient and useful listing of tasks, key events, and conditions that must be accomplished for mission success. Additional information such as CCIRs, NAIs, TAIs, DPs, or reporting requirements can be included as required by the commander and/or his staff. However, only those items that relate to critical events and tasks requiring participation by multiple organizations should be included in order to keep the execution checklist from becoming an unwieldy document. One possible format is shown in Table 2-2.

TASK	TIME	DP	CCIR	CONDITIONS	MOEs	NAI	TAI
Conduct Amphibious Assault	D+30 H-Hour	1 Commence or delay assault	1	Coastal Defense Force unable to engage amphibs/assault craft with ASMS/coastal guns	BDA indicates fixed ASMS/coastal gun/coastal radar sites destroyed		
					No observed movement of mobile ASMSs along Coastal Hwy 1 within 50 km of Green Beach since H-36	1	A
					No observed coastal radar emissions since H-24		
				3rd Motorized Rifle Brigade unable to reinforce 8th Mech Div vicinity ATF Objective 1 for 96 hours	No observed movement of bn sized units along MSR Blue beyond PL Black since H-10.	2	B
					Comm btwn 3rd MRB HQ and I Corps HQ reduced by 75% from I&W baseline		
				41st RAG unable to mass fires at or above bn level on Green Beach	No registration fires observed within 30 km of Green Beach		
					CAS stack manned with at least 6 aircraft from H-1 to H+24		
					Radio comms btwn RAG HQ and Bn HQ reduced by 75% from I&W baseline		
					No observed reinforcement of 41st RAG units since H-72		
Establish Lodgment	NLT D+33 (H+72)	2 If port is incapable of pierside offload, commence in-stream offload or execute Branch Plan 1		Port facility seized (ATF Obj 1) by D+33	No organized resistance (Co sized or above) within FBHL		
				5th Mech Division blocked vic Storkville	Multi-National Force (MNF) blocking position established vic MEF Obj B NLT H+8		
					No observed movement of bn sized units along Coastal Hwy 1 beyond PL Blue after H-Hour	1	A
			2	Port facility supports pierside offload	Harbor fairways and mooring areas unobstructed		
					Damage to pier does not prevent off-load of 2 ships simultaneously		

Table 2-2. Sample execution checklist

f. Transition

The purpose of transition is to provide a successful shift from planning to execution. It is often the most overlooked step in the planning process. It is also one of the most critical elements of assessment. An effective transition ensures that those who will execute the order understand the commander's intent, the concept of operations (to include tasks and conditions), and the planning support tools. By building the executors' situational awareness and understanding of the plan, the transition step establishes the baseline by which success or failure can be measured in execution.

2002. Commander's Critical Information Requirements

The CCIRs are central to effective assessment in execution. CCIRs identify the things that the commander feels he must know and that cannot be left to intuition. Throughout the entire planning process, the commander, with assistance from his staff, must continually develop and modify his CCIRs. CCIRs identify information on friendly activities, enemy activities, and the environment that the commander deems critical to maintaining situational awareness, planning future activities, and assisting in timely and informed decisionmaking.

CCIRs are valuable assessment tools because they reduce the commander's information needs to a manageable level and focus the staff on the exact information that is required. CCIRs should be displayed, tracked, and updated throughout planning and execution to ensure they remain relevant. Care must be taken to limit the number of CCIRs. Too many CCIRs will hinder the staff's ability to focus on the essential information the commander truly needs. Additionally, too many CCIRs will rapidly consume the command's available collection assets.

This page intentionally left blank.

Execution

The scope and complexity of military operations are too great for any one staff officer or section to meet all of the commander's information needs. While a particular commander may task organize his staff to conform to his personal decisionmaking technique, the staff's requirement to support the commander's assessment efforts in execution remain the same. Regardless of how the commander organizes for assessment, the staff must fulfill its role as the commander's primary source of information. The staff must operate with cohesion and focus to manage the critical information the commander needs to assess and make decisions.

3001. Collecting Information

The staff collects essential information for the commander while supervising the execution of the plan. Because the volume of information increases significantly during execution, the staff's ability to support the commander will be determined by how well the staff manages information. Staffs must be able to receive, analyze, process, and distribute massive amounts of information quickly and efficiently.

Staffs must recognize that all information is not of the same importance. Each staff section must analyze matters that affect operations and identify problems that may affect the staff section's area of interest or the command as a whole. One piece of information alone may not be significant, but added to others, it may be the information that allows the commander to gain situational awareness and to make a decision. Therefore, information must be set into the proper frame of reference and be relevant to prevent wasting the commander's time.

The chief of staff is primarily responsible for managing information. He monitors the staff's performance in processing information and ensures that the right information flows to meet the commander's needs. To ensure that

proper and relevant information is collected, the following information "filters" should be developed before the command moves into execution.

a. Commander's Critical Information Requirements

The commander alone decides what information is critical, based on his experience, the mission, the higher commander's intent, and input from the staff. CCIRs (listed in paragraph 3e of the basic order) help the staff filter through vast amounts of information so that only critical information is delivered to the commander. The chief of staff is responsible for overseeing the collection, management, analysis, and presentation of CCIRs. The chief of staff should establish CCIR procedures in the unit SOP and train the staff accordingly.

As the operation progresses, information requirements will change. As a result, both the commander and the staff must review and modify CCIRs to maintain their applicability. This is done by continuously tracking and updating CCIRs during execution. CCIRs should be posted prominently within the combat operations center (COC) and briefed periodically to watch standers. At a minimum, CCIRs should be briefed at every COC shift change or when modifications to any CCIR occur. Additionally, CCIRs should be posted to the command web site with the time and date of the last update displayed.

b. The Order

To effectively supervise the execution of the plan, the staff must be intimately familiar with the order. This familiarity is established by effectively transitioning the plan from the planners (the operational planning team) to the executors (the staff and COC watch standers).

The order is the primary assessment tool!

The staff must know the commander's intent, the concept of operations, tasks, and conditions as they are articulated in the order so that it can focus its collection efforts and accurately interpret the criticality and relevance of incoming information. By understanding the plan, the staff can identify exceptional information that directly affects the success of the current operation. Unlike critical information, exceptional information is neither

published nor explicitly stated; rather, it must be recognized as vital by tactically and technically competent subordinates and staff members that have a thorough understanding of the plan. Exceptional information signals the occurrence of one or more unpredictable events, such as an unforeseen opportunity for success or an early warning of pending failure. Generally, exceptional information is—

- Unexpected, unplanned, and situation-dependent.
- An immediate priority for command and staff action (the information must be acted on for the operation to continue).
- Extremely time-sensitive in terms of decisionmaking.
- Transmitted directly to the commander in as near real time as possible by whatever means is immediately available.
- Applicable to both the friendly and enemy situations.

In order to recognize exceptional information, each staff member must not only know how his functional area is progressing in detail, he must also understand how the operation is progressing overall. The COC, made up of representatives from each staff section and supervised by the G-3 current operations officer, acts as a central "clearing house" for information so that the staff can monitor the overall progress of the operation. The CCIRs, essential tasks, and associated conditions that are delineated in the order should drive the COC's efforts to monitor execution and provide each functional staff section with the information it needs to accurately measure, analyze, and report performance. The execution checklist, decision support matrix, and decision support template are invaluable tools for tracking progress and they should be posted within the COC as well as on the command's web site. Along with CCIRs, the current status of the operation with regard to essential tasks and conditions should be briefed periodically within the COC to ensure all watch standers maintain a proper focus on information collection.

The information the COC provides allows each staff section to analyze execution results (time lines, distances, loss rates, consumption rates, unit effectiveness, enemy actions, etc) and compare these results to the facts and assumptions that were used to formulate the plan. If facts, assumptions, or planning factors become invalid during execution, the staff evaluates what effect this may have on operations and prepares recommendations. More importantly, the staff must remain focused on the purpose of the mission. Because the situation is constantly changing, tasks and conditions may

become irrelevant to the overall mission. The staff must recognize when this occurs and brief the commander accordingly. If the commander feels that a deviation is critical, he will make a decision for future action.

c. Standing Operating Procedures

Standing operating procedures (SOPs) aid the staff in filtering routine information from critical and exceptional information. Routine information is standard, repetitive information that occurs during day-to-day operations. Some routine information may become critical or exceptional depending on the mission, but, for the most part, routine information—

- Should be used within and between staffs with little commander involvement.
- Is used to prepare and verify staff estimates.
- Helps identify and anticipate potential problem areas.
- Allows the staff to resolve routine matters without commander involvement.
- Is not time-sensitive in terms of decisionmaking.
- Does not directly affect the execution of operational or tactical operations.
- Is specified in the unit's SOP as to when (time and sequence) and how (what format) the information should be reported.
- Is normally transmitted via predetermined channels that are established between units and staffs as per the SOP.

Specific items within the SOP that help the staff filter routine information from critical information are the reports matrix and the battle rhythm matrix. Obviously, these items will be generic in nature and will require modification to nest within the higher headquarters' reporting requirements and battle rhythm.

- **Reports Matrix**. The reports matrix provides a methodology for managing routine reports during execution. It provides a brief description of the report along with who should send and receive the report, when and how it should be transmitted, and what precedence the report holds. The example shown in table 3-1 is not a complete matrix but it does provide a possible format.

Report Title	From	Submit As Of	Arrive NLT	Transmit Type	Precedence	To	Info
PERSTAT	MSCs	1500	2100	E-mail/ Home Page	Routine	MEF G-1	
MSC INTSUM	MSCs	0000/ 1200	1400/ 0200	JDISS	Routine	MEF G-2	MSC
SITREP	MSCs	0000	0200	AUTODIN Home Page	Priority	MEF COC	MSC
SAM Report	Wing	As Req'd	As Req'd	E-mail	Priority	MEF COC Air Cell	MSC
Daily Tgting Guidance Msg	MEF G-3 (Force Fires)	1200	1300	Home Page	Priority	MSC	MEF LNOs
LOG SITREP	MSCs	0600–0600	1000	Home Page	Routine	MEF G-4	
Comm Status Summary Report	MSCs	0000	0200	E-mail	Routine	MEF G-6	

Table 3-1. Sample reports matrix.

- **Battle Rhythm**. Much of a command's routine information requirements are predictable. A generic command battle rhythm enables the staff to position information at its anticipated points of need by identifying daily briefings, meetings, and report requirements. This speeds information flow and reduces the demands on communications systems. Once an operation commences, the command's battle rhythm should be modified to nest within the higher headquarters' battle rhythm. See table 3-2.

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS
0000	COC Shift Change	COC	COC Watch
0100	SITREP Update to component / CINC	COC	COC Fires
0200	Reactive Attk Guidance Matrix published	COC	COC Fires
0500	Morning update slides due to SWO	COC	Battlestaff
0600	ATO Execution	COC	
0730	Morning update slides to component	COC	COPSO
0800	CG Morning Update	OSC	Battlestaff
0800	Target Guidance Working Group	FFCC	
0900	Plans Update Brief	FOPS	CG, FOPSO, G-3
1000	MSC SITREP information due	COC	MSCs
1145	COC Shift Change Brief	COC	COC Watch
1200	COC Shift Change	COC	COC Watch
1200	MEF SITREP published	COC	G-3
1200	G-2 INTSUM published	COC	
1300	Evening Update slides due to SWO	COC	Battlestaff
1530	Evening Update slides to component	COC	COPSO
1600	CG Evening Update	OSC	Battlestaff
1700	SITREP Update to component / CINC	COC	SWO
TBD	VTC	OSC	TBD
1800	ATO published		
2000	Targeting Board	OSC	TBD
2345	COC Shift Change Brief	COC	COC Watch
0000	COC Shift Change	COC	COC Watch

Table 3-2. Sample battle rhythm.

3002. Presenting Information

The staff should tailor the presentation of information to fit the commander's decisionmaking style. The commander may want information presented to him in a narrative or a graphic format (maps, charts, graphs, etc) depending on his personality, experience, and the level of comfort he has with his staff. The chief of staff should ensure that briefing procedures and formats support the commander's individual needs and are incorporated into the unit SOP.

Regardless of the presentation format, the staff must provide a concise progress review of a task, condition, warfighting function, or staff functional area so that the commander can quickly assimilate the information and understand the situation. Typically, briefing tools will not display the detailed analytical information used to formulate staff estimates. This type of information can be briefed by the appropriate staff section as required or accessed during the brief through the hyperlink function of Microsoft PowerPoint. Figure 3-1 and table 3-3 are examples of how information may be presented.

30 Mar 00
D+31

ESSENTIAL TASKS

TASK: Establish lodgement at Port of Red NLT D+33 in order to facilitate introduction of JTF follow-on forces.

CONDITIONS   **STATUS**

• **Port facility seized (ATF Obj A)**

• **5th Mech Division blocked vic Storkville**

• **Port facility supports pierside offload**

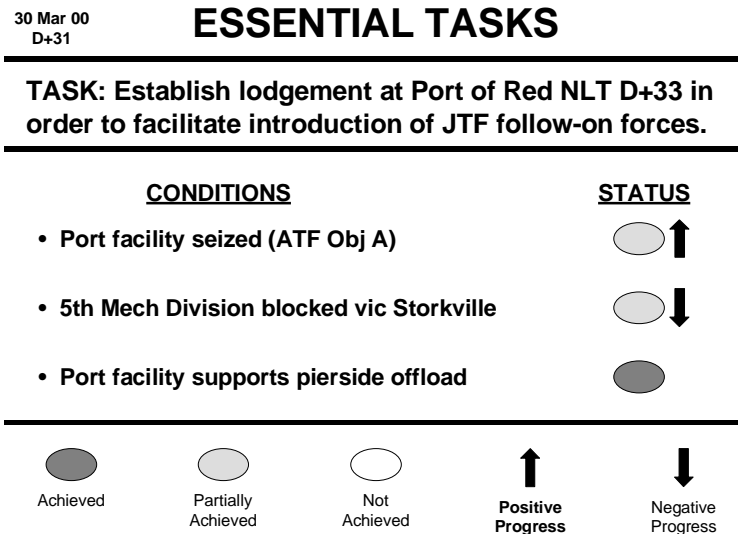| Achieved | Partially Achieved | Not Achieved | **Positive Progress** | Negative Progress |

Figure 3-1. Sample graphic briefing format.

ESSENTIAL TASK: Establish lodgment at Port of Red NLT D+33 in order to facilitate introduction of JTF follow-on forces.

CONDITION	MOE	STATUS	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Port facility seized (ATF Obj A)	No organized resistance (Co sized or above) within FBHL	Rear guard of 4th Mech Div (401st & 402nd Mech Bns) conducting withdrawal under pressure northeast MEF Obj 1 along Hwy 2. No other enemy resistance detected within FBHL.	Continue attack. Activate Grid Boxes C1C, C1F, & C1I to facilitate Wing attack on withdrawing forces.
5th Mech Div blocked vic Storkville	Multi-National Force (MNF) blocking position established vic MEF Obj B NLT H+8	Blocking position established	Divert air to delay enemy along Coastal Hwy 1. Commit MEF Reserve to establish blocking position vic CP 3.
	No observed movement of bn sized units along Coastal Hwy 1 beyond PL Blue after H-Hour	Bn sized elements observed bypassing block position.	
Port facility supports pierside offload.	Harbor fairways and mooring areas unobstructed	SLRP reports no obstructions	Prepare for pierside offload.
	Damage to pier does not prevent off-load of 2 ships simultaneously	SLRP reports no damage	

Table 3-3. Sample narrative briefing format.

This page intentionally left blank.

Appendix A

Task Considerations

The following table provides some considerations for planners when developing and assigning tasks.

Task	Considerations
attack—An offensive action characterized by movement supported by fire with the objective of defeating or destroying the enemy. (MCRP 5-12C)	A clear purpose must accompany the assignment of the task attack.
attrition (attrit)—The reduction in the effectiveness of a force caused by the loss of personnel or materiel. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A force assigned the task of "attrit" should normally be assigned the degree of success to be achieved in support of its purpose. To the greatest extent possible, planners should articulate the degree of success in terms of observable enemy activities and not in terms of numbers or percentages.
block—A tactical task assigned to a unit that requires it to deny the enemy access to a given area or to prevent enemy advance in a given direction or an avenue of approach. It may be for a specified time. Units assigned this mission may have to retain terrain and accept decisive engagement. (MCRP 5-12A)	A force assigned the task of "block" should be assigned the degree of success to be achieved (the size of force to be blocked) and/or a specified time frame in support of its purpose.
breach—The employment of any means available to break through or secure a passage through an obstacle. (MCRP 5-12C)	A force assigned the task of "breach" should know what size force is to be passed through the breach.

Task	Considerations
bypass—To maneuver around an obstacle, position, or enemy force to maintain the momentum of advance., Previously unreported obstacles are reported to higher headquarters. Bypassed enemy forces are reported to higher headquarters. (MCRP 5-12C)	A unit assigned the task "bypass" should also be given *bypass criteria. Bypass criteria* is a measure during the conduct of an offensive operation established by higher headquarters that specifies the conditions and size under which enemy units and contact may be avoided.
canalize—To restrict operations to a narrow zone by use of existing or reinforcing obstacles or by fire or bombing. (Joint Pub 1-02)	The tasked unit should be given the physical limits of the narrow zone, the size of the force to be canalized, and desired duration of the task.
clear—A tactical task to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance in an assigned zone, area, or location by destroying, capturing, or forcing the withdrawal of enemy forces such that they cannot interfere with the friendly unit's ability to accomplish its mission. (MCRP 5-12A	The degree of success to be achieved should be specified by describing what is meant by "organized resistance" (see bypass criteria above).
contain—To stop, hold, or surround the forces of the enemy or to cause the enemy to center activity on a given front and to prevent his withdrawing any part of his forces for use elsewhere. (Joint Pub 1-02)	"Center activity" should be defined in terms of unit size or enemy capability to be contained, location, and time frame.
control—To maintain physical influence by occupation or range of weapon systems over the activities or access in a defined area. (MCRP 5-12A)	The area to be controlled and duration of the task should be specified.
cover—The action by land, air, or sea forces to protect by offense, defense, or threat of either or both. (Joint Pub 1-02)	See consideration for covering force.

Task	Considerations
covering force—**1.** A force operating apart from the main force for the purpose of intercepting, engaging, delaying, disorganizing, and deceiving the enemy before he can attack the force covered. **2.** Any body or detachment of troops which provides security for a larger force by observation, reconnaissance, attack, or defense, or by any combination of these methods. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A force is assigned the task to "cover" as one of the tasks in security force operations. Before assigning a unit the task of "cover", planners should ensure that they specify the scope of the task in terms of time and terrain
damage—Damage can be used to reflect a subjective or objective assessment of battle damage. (MCRP 3-16A)	"Damage" is not a task. It is used to describe effects. *
defeat—A tactical task to either disrupt or nullify the enemy force commander's plan and subdue his will to fight so that he is unwilling or unable to further pursue his adopted COA and yields to the will of his opponent. (MCRP 5-12A)	When assigning the task of defeat, a statement that describes end state conditions should be used to define task completion ("By defeat I mean …").
defend—A combat operation designed to defeat an attacker and prevent him from achieving his objectives. It employs all means and methods available to prevent, resist, or destroy an enemy attack. (MCRP 5-12A)	The area to be defended and the duration of the task should be specified.
delay—To alter the time of arrival of forces at a point on the battlefield or the ability of the enemy to project combat power from a point on the battlefield. In interdiction doctrine, delay results from disrupting, diverting, or destroying enemy capabilities or targets. (MCRP 3-16A)	When "delay" is used as a purpose to a task, it should be qualified in terms of time and terrain (i.e. *neutralize unit X in order to delay its reinforcement of enemy units vicinity of MEF Objective 1 by 72 hours*). *

Task	Considerations
delaying operation—An operation in which a force under pressure trades space for time by slowing down the enemy's momentum and inflicting maximum damage on the enemy without, in principle, becoming decisively engaged. (Joint Pub 1-02)	Identifying the required time delay will help the tasked unit determine the level of effort required and define what "decisively engaged" means.
destroy—A tactical task to physically render an enemy force combat-ineffective unless it is reconstituted. (MCRP 5-12A)	The degree of destruction should be specified in terms of observable enemy capabilities and not simply in terms of numbers and percentages. *Destroy* as an interdiction objective (attack effect) calls for ruining the structure, organic existence, or condition of an enemy target that is essential to an enemy capability (MCRP 3-16A). *Destroy* as a fires effect requires that a target physically be rendered combat ineffective or so damaged that it cannot function unless restored, reconstituted, or rebuilt. Setting automated fire support default values for destruction such as 30% does not guarantee the achievement of the commander's intent. The surviving 70% may still influence the operation. Destruction missions are expensive in terms of time and material. Consider whether neutralization or suppression may be more efficient (MCRP 3-16A). *
disrupt—A tactical task or obstacle effect that integrates fire planning and obstacle effort to break apart an enemy's formation and tempo, interrupt the enemy's timetable, or cause premature commitment of enemy forces, or the piecemealing of his attack. (MCRP 5-12A)	A force assigned the task "disrupt" should normally be assigned the degree of success to be achieved and/or the duration of the "disruption" in relationship to its purpose. In targeting, we *disrupt* enemy plans by precluding effective interaction or the cohesion of enemy combat and combat support systems. In Air Force interdiction doctrine, disrupt forces the enemy into less efficient and more vulnerable dispositions (MCRP 3-16A). *

28

Task	Considerations
exploitation—An offensive operation that usually follows a successful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A force assigned the task of "exploit" should normally be assigned the degree of success to be achieved and/or the duration of the "exploitation" in relationship to its purpose.
fix—A tactical task in which actions are taken to prevent the enemy from moving any part of his forces either from a specific location or for a specific period of time by holding or surrounding them to prevent their withdrawal for use elsewhere. (MCRP 5-12A)	The size of the force to be fixed, the duration of the task, and where to fix the enemy should be specified.
guard—A security element whose primary task is to protect the main force by fighting to gain time, while also observing and reporting information. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A force is assigned the task to "guard" as one of the tasks in security force operations. Before assigning a unit the task of "guard", planners should ensure that they specify the scope of the task in terms of time and terrain. A guard force normally operates within the range of the main body's indirect fire weapons.
harass (harassing fire)—Fire designed to disturb the rest of the enemy troops, to curtail movement, and, by threat of losses, to lower morale. (Joint Pub 1-02)	The decision to employ harassing fires needs careful consideration. Harassing fire has little real effect on the enemy and depletes assets. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of harassment fires in tangible terms. However, harassing fires may be a combat multiplier in some situations. Consider their use in military operations other than war, delaying actions, and economy of force operations. *
interdict—A tactical task which is oriented on the enemy to prevent, hinder, or delay the use of an area or route by enemy forces. (MCRP 5-12A)	A force assigned the task of "interdict" should normally be assigned the degree of success to be achieved (i.e., the effect desired relative to enemy capabilities) and/or the duration of the "interdiction" in relationship to its purpose.

Task	Considerations
Interdiction—An action to divert, disrupt, delay, or destroy the enemy's surface military potential before it can be used effectively against friendly forces. (Joint Pub 1-02)	See condition for interdict.
limit—Limit is an effect on enemy capabilities that applies to reducing the options or courses of action available to the enemy commander. (MCRP 3-16A)	"Limit" is not a task. It is used to describe effects. For example, the commander may direct the use of air interdiction and fire support to limit the use of one or more avenues of approach available to the enemy. Also, he may direct the use of interdiction to limit enemy use of fire support capability. *
neutralize—As pertains to military operations, to render ineffective or unusable. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A force assigned the task of "neutralize" will normally be assigned a specific time frame or degree of neutralization to be achieved in relationship to its purpose. Neutralization effects should be described in terms of observable enemy activity. Planners should avoid articulating neutralization effects in terms of numbers or percentages whenever possible. Neutralization fire results in enemy personnel or material becoming incapable of interfering with an operation or COA. Key questions planners must ask are when and how long does the commander want the target to be neutralized. Most planned fire missions are neutralization fires (MCRP 3-16A). *
occupy—A tactical task in which a force moves onto an objective, key terrain, or other man-made or natural terrain area without opposition, and controls that entire area. (MCRP 5-12A)	A force assigned the task "occupy" should be assigned the duration of the "occupation" in relationship to its purpose.
protect—A tactical task to prevent observation of or engagement or interference with, a force or location. (MCRP 5-12A)	A force assigned the task "protect" should be assigned the degree of success to be achieved and/or the duration of the "protection" in relationship to its purpose.

Task	Considerations
reduce—**1.** A tactical task to gain control over an enemy position or objective. **2.** A task to create lanes through or over an obstacle sufficient to allow the attacking force to accomplish its mission. (MCRP 5-12A)	In both definitions, the tasked unit should be assigned the degree of success in terms of time and terrain as applicable.
retain—A tactical task to occupy and hold a terrain feature to ensure it is free of enemy occupation or use. (MCRP 5-12A)	A unit assigned the task of "retain" should be given a specific timeframe in relationship to its purpose.
rupture—A task to create a gap in enemy defensive positions quickly. (MCRP 5-12A)	See conditions for breach and reduce.
screen—A security element whose primary task is to observe, identify and report information, and which only fights in self-protection. (Joint Pub 1-02)	A unit assigned the task "screen" may be required to maintain surveillance; provide early warning to the main body; or impede, destroy, and harass enemy reconnaissance within its capability without becoming decisively engaged. The scope of task should be articulated in terms of time and terrain.
secure—In an operational context, to gain possession of a position or terrain feature, with or without force, and to make such disposition as will prevent, as far as possible, its destruction or loss by enemy action. (Joint Pub 1-02)	The attacking force may or may not have to physically occupy the area. Conditions should be established that define when a position or terrain feature is "secured." Usually, conditions can be expressed in terms of observable enemy activity.
seize—To clear a designated area and obtain control of it. (MCRP 5-12C)	Units assigned the task of "seize" will usually have to gain physical possession of a terrain feature from an enemy force. Note that the task "clear" is imbedded within the definition of the task "seize." See the definition of "clear" for specific planning considerations.

Task	Considerations
suppression—Temporary or transient degradation by an opposing force of the performance of a weapons system below the level needed to fulfill its mission objectives. (Joint Pub 1-02)	Typically, this task involves employing direct or indirect fires, electronic attack, or smoke on enemy personnel, weapons, or equipment to prevent or degrade enemy fires and observation of the friendly forces in order to support a specified movement/maneuver. A force assigned the task of "suppress" will normally be assigned a specific time frame or the desired effects of the "suppression" in terms of enemy capabilities and in relationship to the task's purpose. *

* Terms such as *limit, disrupt, delay, divert, destroy,* and *damage* are used to describe the effects of attack on enemy capabilities. They should not be confused with the terms *harass, suppress, neutralize,* or *destroy.* These terms are used as attack criteria to determine the degree of damage or duration of effects on a specific target.

Appendix B

Glossary

Note: Acronyms change over time in response to new operational concepts, capabilities, doctrinal changes and other similar developments. The following publications are the sole authoritative sources for official military acronyms:

    1. Joint Publication 1-02*, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.
    2. MCRP 5-12C, *Marine Corps Supplement to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.*

CCIR	commander's critical information requirement
COA	course of action
COC	combat operations center
DP	decision point
MAGTF	Marine air-ground task force
MCDP	Marine Corps doctrinal publication
MCRP	Marine Corps reference publication
MOE	measure of effectiveness
MSTP	MAGTF Staff Training Program
NAI	named area of interest
RAG	regimental artillery group
SOP	standing operating procedures
TAI	targeted area of interest